

Federated Malay States Railway, enroute from
Bangkok to Singapore, March 16, 1921.

Dear Margaret,

My last letter was closed as we were drawing into Bangkok after the visit to Chiang Mai. That evening Dr. Barnes, Dr. Heiser and I went in rickshaws to the movies. It was the first time that I had patronized the Chinese rickshaw coolie, and I was very much pleased with the service he gave for 25 satangs, or about ten cents American. It was in the cool of the evening, and hats were unnecessary, even for the unthatched. The rickshaws are silent with their rubber tires, and the coolies run with a steady springy gait that is very agreeable. At the movies we sat in the gallery, or stalls, or whatever you call the most expensive part of the theater where the floor is for the natives of the poorer classes. The theater was large, and electric fans were constantly supplying artificial breezes from the ceiling while we sat around the table in our stall in spacious wicker chairs. In the meantime we were entertained by installments of the present-day pet abomination of the movie theaters, the discontinued serial. The first left the hero about to be exterminated by the black-robed villains of the Mystery of Number 13. In the second the hero, portrayed by Dempsey, the prize-fighter, was just about to kick a football loaded with dynamite at the opening of a great football game, when we were told that the story would be continued the next week. The Siamese in the pit, unable to read the legends or the lips, cheered the heroes in the right places and handled the villains most roughly. They were evidently experienced movie fans.

The next day was a very busy Saturday. First we went with Dr. Mendelson, an American who has become Medical Officer of Health for Bangkok, and visited the abattoir and the great cement-floored sheds where cattle intended for export are held for a period of quarantine. After that we went through the police hospital, which is under his jurisdiction. It was clean and made a fairly good impression. Then we went to his office and laboratory and talked over things in general. Dr. Mendelson examines the water of Bangkok every day with the result that cholera is practically limited to the part of the city across the river, where the city supply is not available. In the afternoon Dr. Barnes, Dr. Ellis, and I went on a little sight-seeing expedition in a hired car. The most interesting thing we saw was Wat Saket, which is on the top of a high steep hill made of brick, probably a pile of ruins. Steep walks and stairways wind around the hill and finally reach the temple on the top where it is said there is a footprint of Buddha. As the temple is kept locked except on rare occasions I cannot testify as to the truth of the statement. We saw a number of interesting wats in passing, and visited the museum. The museum was as stupid as the wats and temples were interesting. It was a regular collection of junk, probably mostly donations. I will not waste any time describing it.

On the next day we were in the hands of our friends and they had planned a very full program indeed. First we were taken to the University of Siam (Chulalongkorn) University. A great deal of money had been spent in putting up a modern concrete building with elaborate concrete Siamese trimmings. The money ran out, or there was some other difficulty, and the roof is thatched and will have to wait a while for the beautiful tiles of the plans. We were shown through the place by His Excellency Phya Anuhich

Vidhura, Rector of the University and other members of the Faculty. Some of them were trained in English Universities and speak the language well. Most everywhere we went they served us with soda water, and I was pleased to note that they did not seem to have accepted the whisky and soda habit of the English.

We were taken next to the old palace in which the first years of the medical school are taught. We were shown about by His Serene Highness Mom Chao Bemari Kashem, A.M., R.A.C., Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the Dean of the Medical Faculty, who stayed in the background not being as proficient in English as the Prince.

We were next treated to a splendid bit of sightseeing. We drove through the city past the outer city wall and the Royal Pages College with its Siamese architecture and royal blue tiled roofs with wide yellow borders, to the marble palace where the throne room is. This palace is wholly Italian and very elegant. It is built of white marble and has a large central dome. Inside there are wide marble stairways, elaborate mural paintings, deep red carpets, and gilded chairs with red upholstery. Almost in the center is the throne. It is evidently intended to be sat upon cross-legged, and it rests on a sort of table on a tiger skin. Behind it is a white umbrella of nine rings and smaller umbrellas are on each side. The walls were ~~XXXX~~ lined with rich imported marbles, and the domes are elaborately painted.

You will be quite shocked to know that I photographed the throne and its surroundings, with the consent of our guides. I am anxious to find out how the pictures came out, and I hope they are not spoiled before we can have the films developed at Singapore. I took a picture at the medical school of the Prince and the others who showed us about.

We went next to the Royal Palace where you will remember I had been with Dr. Heiser to pay our respects to three of the Princes when we first came to Bangkok. It was there that the payment of a small coin ~~XXXXXX~~ to his keeper induced the Royal White Elephant to pay his respects to us. We saw the beautiful exterior of the Dusit throne room and the Chakkri Palace in the enclosure, or inner wall. In front of the Chakkri Palace the trees are trimmed so that the branches carry many round balls of solid green foliage. The most interesting buildings at the Royal Palace are in the inner enclosure containing the many ornate buildings of the Wat Pra Keo. As we entered the gate we came face to face with an image of the god of medicine, and we had to stop and take a picture of the doctors grouped around it. At the feet of the god was a stone roller which was used like a mortar and pestle. Near by were some ancient stones which had been brought to the temple grounds and deciphered by professor Bradley of the University of California. They contained early Siamese history. The central building of the wat contains the famous emerald Buddha.

This building has many beautiful gables, and the portico has fine pillars. on the eaves are little bells with vanes on the clappers, so that they tinkle in the wind. The doors are black and ornamented with a beautiful fine pattern of inlaid mother of pearl. The inside of the temple is disappointing, as it has more significance than beauty. The walls are simple and bear paintings of the life of Buddha. On a tall pyramidal pedestal at the back of the temple sits the emerald Buddha, a small image about two feet high with a jewel in his forehead. All around him are accumulated gifts, including golden trees that were sent as tribute by some of the Malay Free States before they came under English influence. Around the walls

were cabinets filled with jewels and all sorts of images of gold and other materials. There was little arrangement and the impression was one of quantity. Of course we should not have had the ~~appx~~ opportunity to visit the throne room and the wat Pra Keo as we did, if special arrangements had not been made for us.

We hurried next to the hospital and medical school where the last years of the medical course are given. We were received by His Excellency Phya Baisai Silpsatr, Under Secretary of State in the Ministry of Education, the Minister being away on a tour. We viewed plans for new buildings and drank the everpresent soda water, which was most acceptable in this most thirsty country. We visited the Pathology Building and the very attractive obsteric building where you could see the Siamese mothers on their board beds, while in the adjoining room the youngest babies were lying on little trays under the supervision of a nurse.

Next we ferried back across the river and drove to the American Legation where we were the guests of Ambassador Hunt at luncheon. The other guests were Dr. Heiser; Dr. Ayer, the Advisor to the Head of the Department of Health; Dr. Ellis, American and Professor of Pathology; and Dr. Barnes. Before luncheon I noticed a peculiar cat in the parlor and found out it was a real Siamese cat, the first and only one I saw. It was ordinary in size, but its color was extraordinary. It was cream with rich brown trimmings and white toes on its deep brown feet. Its eyes were pale blue. It then developed that the cat had recently been given to the ambassador by Mr. Darlington who came up on the Kuala with us determined to find a pair of Siamese cats and return to the United States with them. He had finally caught sight of this cat at one of the Klongs (canals) and had bought it for ten ticals, but, hunt as he would, he could not find a male to go with it, and he gave up and left the cat with Mr. Hunt.

We had a most interting luncheon. Mr. Hunt took good care of us. He is of the type which has given America its reputation for having a low-brow foreign service. He offered us "cigareets" and picked his teeth loudly during the meal. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ He comes from Arizona and was appointed by Wilson. I presume he is now due for a long sea-voyage. He told us some interesting things. A Dr. Rock of the U.S. Department of Agriculture had recently been through Bangkok and had also been in ChiengMai when Professor Crampton of Columbia was there. He then went ~~on~~ through to Burma and was collecting Chaulmoogra oil trees on account of their increasing importance in the treatment of leprosy when a tiger came into the village where he was staying and killed two women outright, wounded another fatally and carried off a child. The natives then dug a pit, baited it with the body of one of the women and caught the tiger. Shortly afterward a herd of wild elephants came and messed things up generally. How is this for botanizing under difficulties.

During the day rumors were about that the king had broken off his engagement to the Princess whom he was to marry, and whose royal garments we saw in preparation at Chieng Mai. It was said that he was going to marry her sister instead. The main fact was probably true, but ~~the~~ many reasons spoken of were conflicting and probably not worth repeating.

In the afternoon we received Prince Jainad, brother to the king, in our room at the hotel. He is head of the Health Department. In the evening we dined at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Ellis. Mr Hunt was another guest.

The next morning we arose at 4:30 and took the hotel barge up the river at six o'clock to go to Bangkok Noi (old Bangkok) to take the train for Singapore. The city was very interesting and beautiful in the dim early morning light. The towers of wats could be seen on every side. Most impressive was a tall wat erected as a monument to the founding of the city. We passed the Navy Yard and saw the few ships of the Siamese Navy at anchor. Dr. Cort, brother of Professor Cort formerly under Kofoed at the U. of Cal. and now in the School of Hygiene and Public Health at Hopkins, Dr. Ellis, and Dr. Barnes were at the station to see us off. The train started on time at seven o'clock. As we went southward we entered regions of higher rainfall and saw green rice fields and luxurious jungles. We spent the night in the railway rest house at Chumphon.

The next day we traveled from seven to five, or rather seventeen, as they progressively call it here in Siam. We spent the night at Tung Song, and Dr. Heiser lost his Philippine straw hat in the mix up over our numerous pieces of baggage. This morning we had to start in the dim morning light at 6:34. We passed into the Federated Malay states at Padang Besar at three this afternoon, and we have seen many interesting limestone cliffs showing caves and stalactites. This morning the native girls brought mangostines to the train and I made the acquaintance of this very delicious fruit. I am not yet prepared to say whether I agree with the statement that they are the best fruit on earth, but they are good on first acquaintance.

We also made the acquaintance through our nostrils with another famous fruit, the durian. A turbaned Indian came into our car and fed his family. The stench was terrific and finally a lady had his basket removed to the platform, much to the relief of the rest of us. I am going to taste a durian sometime. It could not be as bad as its smell.

We shall have to change cars in a few minutes, so good-night, Sweetheart,

Wilbur.